

the largest single grantee was Sir Richard Gresham.

Much was acquired by middlemen, who bought scattered parcels of land, held them for the rise, and disposed of them piecemeal when they got a good offer; in London, groups of tradesmen—cloth-workers, leather-sellers, merchant tailors, brewers, tallow-chandlers—formed actual syndicates to exploit the market. Rack-renting, evictions, and the conversion of arable to pasture were the natural result, for surveyors wrote up values at each transfer, and, unless the last purchaser squeezed his tenants, the transaction would not pay.

Why, after all, should a landlord be more squeamish than the Crown ? " Do ye not know," said the grantee of one of the Sussex manors of the monastery of Sion, in answer to some peasants who protested at the seizure of their commons, " that the King's Grace hath put down all the houses of monks, friars and nuns ? Therefore now is the time come that we gentlemen will pull down the houses of such poor knaves as ye be."⁷

Such arguments, if inconsequent, were too convenient not to be common. The protests of contemporaries receive detailed confirmation from the bitter struggles which can be traced between the peasantry and some of the new landlords—the Herberts, who enclosed a whole village to make the park at Washerne, in which, according to tradition, the gentle Sidney was to write

his *Arcadia*, the St. Johns at Abbot's Ripton, and Sir John Yorke, third in the line of speculators in the lands of Whitby Abbey, whose tenants found their rents raised from £29 to £64 a year, and for nearly twenty years were besieging the Government with petitions for redress.⁸ The legend, still repeated late in the seventeenth century, that the grantees of monastic estates died out in three generations, though unveracious, is not surprising. The wish was father to the thought.

It was an age in which the popular hatred of the encloser and the engrosser found a natural ally in